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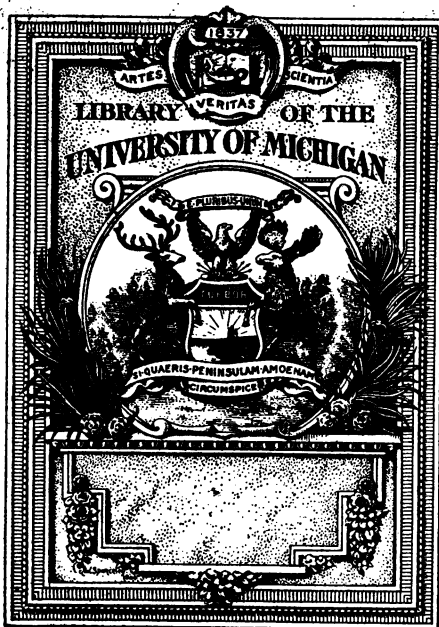
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G W E N

42088.

*A DRAMA IN MONOLOGUE*

IN SIX ACTS

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE EPIC OF HADES"

[By Lewis Morris]

"Everything is so wonderful, great and holy, so sad and yet not bitter, so full of Death, and so bordering on Heaven."—JOHN STERLING in Carlyle's Life.

LONDON

C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1879

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# G W E N.



## PROLOGUE.

Not of old time alone  
Was Life a scene of hopes and fears,  
High joys and bitter tears ;  
Nor Chance nor Fate are done ;  
Nor from our fuller Day  
The fabled gods have wholly fled away ;  
The World and Man to-day are young  
As when blind Homer sung.

What if the old forms change ?  
They were but forms, the things remain.  
What if our fear and pain  
Show not like monsters strange ?  
The self-same path of life  
We tread, who fare beneath the sun to-day ;  
We sink or triumph in the strife  
No otherwise than they.

Compact of good and ill  
Their life of old was, as is ours ;  
The same mysterious Will  
Controlled their finite powers ;  
And to strange thoughts of Fate  
And workings of a fixed Necessity  
Which rules both small and great,  
As they bowed, so bow we.

---

✓ And Love, the Lord and King—  
Not Eros, but diviner far—  
Still upon heavenward wing  
Mounts like a shining star.  
Than clouds and thunders stronger,  
He brings a clear ray from the invisible Sun ;  
And when he shines no longer,  
✓ Life's play is done.



TO HIS FRIEND

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.,

THIS POEM IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.





## PREFACE.

---

THE following poem is, as things now are, so far removed from the possibility of representation on the stage, that it seems needless to apologise for its wide departure from all the traditions of the acted drama.

The use of monologue is due to the fact that the writer has found it easier by this method to ensure to his characters the full expression of their inner selves than by subjecting them to the necessary limitations and frequent trivialities of dialogue.

It will be observed that the characters in Act VI. are not those of the rest of the poem.

*December, 1878.*



# ACT I.

**B**



## SCENE I.

HENRY.

The sweet cold air of these untrodden hills  
Breathes gently. From the bustle of the inn  
I turn refreshed to this free mountain-side,  
And listen to the innumerable sound  
Of the loud brook beneath, which roars and spumes  
Brown-white against the granite. These thick firs  
Shed balm upon the evening air ; there comes  
No footstep but the rabbit's or the shrew's  
Upon this grassy path, which winds and winds  
Around the hill-side, under promontories  
Of gold and purple, to the grey old church,

Where, chancing yesterday at eve, I caught  
The sound of hymns, richer and fuller far  
Than those of yore ; and, hidden within the porch,  
Heard the prayers rising in a tongue unknown,  
But musical as Greek ; and not unmoved  
Watched the loud preacher, firing with his theme,  
Grow rhythmic, and the answering moans which showed  
He touched the peasant heart.

Ah, it was long

Since I had heard men pray. I have seen the cloud  
Of incense rolling to the fretted roofs  
Of dim cathedrals in the fair old lands  
Where Faith weds not with Reason ; I have heard  
The Benediction service, pure and sweet,  
Lit by young voices ; I have watched with fear  
In college aisles the polished, delicate priest  
Poise his smooth periods on the razor edge  
Of a too fine-drawn logic ; I have stood

And listened all unmoved, or all ashamed .  
That I was moved a little, by the trick  
And artifice of speech which, though I knew it,  
Could cheat the heart a moment, while the preacher  
Enchained his ignorant thousands. None of these  
Moved me as that unknown tongue yesterday.  
I thought my faith reviving. Tush ! what folly !  
That died long years ago from the roots, dried up  
By the strong glare of knowledge, nor could aught  
Of all the miracles the Churchmen feign  
E'er water it to life. That died long since,  
Killed dead by German learning and the strong  
And arrogant Priests of Science. Yet God knows—  
If God there be—I would give my life to know  
The strong Belief of old, when little hands  
Were folded morn and eve, and little eyes  
Scarce open from the night, or half weighed down  
By the long hours of play, were raised to see

Heaven in a mother's gaze.

I would my soul  
Might cast from it the dead unlovely load  
Of dead men's speculations, rottennesses  
Born of unloving lives which took the cell  
And cloister for the home, and the midnight lamp  
For the glow of the hearth, and palsied limbs of doubt  
For the father's stalwart stride. I am young still ;  
Yet often, when the flash of racing oars,  
The shouts, the rushing feet, the joyous noise,  
Floated among the avenues at eve  
To my still college chamber ; there would come  
A weariness, a surfeit, a distaste  
Of all the painted show which men call life,  
Of all the sensual flush which men call love,  
Of all the hollow, vain logomachies  
Men take for learning, and I seemed to live  
In premature decay, and to have touched



The fruit of life with eager lips and found it  
Crumble away in dust. And yet I know  
How little 'tis my few laborious years  
Have given me of learning that might take  
The utmost space of our allotted years,  
Yet leave us still unquenched. And yet what bar—  
But seven little years—is there that parts  
Me and my boyhood? Seven little years!  
And still I am a youth in frame, in mind,  
In innocence of harm of thought or deed,  
In scorn of wrong, and of the sensual stye  
Wherein the boor lies bound. Only some power  
There is which holds me fast and binds my will;  
Only some dim and paralyzing force  
Freezes the springs of action, till I lie  
Moored in some tideless and forgotten creek,  
A ship which lies and rots; while on high sea  
The salt winds blow, the white crests break, the sail,

Filled with the stress of hope and youth and act,  
Speeds to the unseen harbour.

What shall cure

This sickness of the soul? I would that I  
Were like that peasant lad whom yester-eve  
I saw—a stalwart boy, on whose red cheek  
Scant sign of manhood showed; whose strong arm wound  
Around his sweetheart's waist, as free from shame,  
While down the village street they loitered slow  
As 'twere the end of life to grow and breed  
And die, as do his herds. Yet here again  
I hesitate to act, because I know  
What love is in its cause, what in its end,  
And by what secret, miry paths full oft  
The winged god steals, when all his violet plumes  
Are smirched with foulness, and his fair eyes droop,  
Cloyed with the grosser sweets of lower earth,  
And the keen arrow flies not through the skies,

But drops a blunted shaft.

I would I knew  
Less, or grew wiser, knowing. Golden hair,  
Sweet eyes, the lithe young form, the girlish voice  
Which issues forth so soft from the red lips  
Arched like the bow of Cupid, the soft neck  
Like a white pillar ; these were charms enow  
I warrant, which might draw as by a spell  
The rustic youth around. Yes, she was fair  
And sweet to see, and better, from her eyes  
A pure young soul looked forth, which was well housed  
Within so pure a body.—“Gwen” he called her—  
’Tis a fair name—when by the vicarage gate  
Her father stayed a moment courteously  
To greet the stranger, and her shy glance turned  
And met my tell-tale eyes. Surely a man  
Who had seen the hollowness of things might here  
Dwell not unhappy—purple hills around,

And great tranquillity—a wife's sweet smile  
Beside him ; little hands to draw him back  
To the kindly earth ; and all the healthy load  
Of daily liturgies which make a heaven  
Of earth, and doubt a madness.

Tush ! what folly

Is this? Have I not passed these things and spurned  
The weakness from me—I, who have given years  
Of youth to learning, and am tired a while  
Of my mistress, nothing more?

And yet, what hope

Was it that brought me hither, this last night  
I spend among the mountains? Was it to watch  
The sunset glories smite the golden sea,  
Or hear the fairy rivulet fall in foam  
Among the pines? Or was it that I thought  
Perchance a slender form might pass this way,  
Crowned with the crown of youth, and a sweet voice

Answer my eager greeting? Oh, what fools  
And hypocrites are we, when a strong Power  
Within us, unsuspected, binds us fast  
And guides our footsteps ! It was not the face  
Of outward nature, but the secret spring  
Which sets our Being to a hidden end,  
And bears the name of Love.

A gleam of blue,

A hat white-plumed—there is no other form  
As graceful ; it is she. I may not love,  
Who cannot wed. I shall not see her more.  
I am young still ; I will but look a moment  
In those young eyes, and hear that sweet young voice  
Refine our common English, and to-morrow  
She will forget the stranger who was kind,  
And I the mountain-nymph who was so fair.

---

## SCENE II.

I know not why my books,  
The learning that I loved, the charm of art,  
Should for a young girl's looks  
Fade from my thought and vanish and depart.  
It was but yesterday  
I loved to pore upon the classic page  
From morn to eve, nor could the damsels gay,  
Who from the parching town  
Flock to these pure cool heights, move me at all.  
'Twas rest enough to roam  
On the hill-side contented all day long,

And watch the shadows come  
O'er moor and hill and purple wastes of sea ;  
To see the evening fall  
On breathless hill and dale, till suddenly  
The pale moon rose ; then wander homeward slow  
To my loved books with cheek with health aglow.  
And now nor hill, nor dale, nor sea,  
Nor the old task sufficeth me.

For two days since, ere night could fall,  
There came a young girl eighteen summers old—  
A simple girl, half peasant, lithe and tall,  
With deep-blue eyes and hair of gold ;  
And straightway my philosophy,  
My learning, all forsaking me,  
Left me a love-sick boy—no more—  
Me who have drunk so deep of wiser lore !  
Too wise, I thought, to rest content

With any childish blandishment ;  
Too wise ! ah fool ! for looking in such eyes,  
'Twere folly to be wise.

For as she tripped round the hill  
To visit some cottage lowly,  
With her basket of food on her arm,  
She showed like Artemis holy ;  
And I doffed to her, and she knew  
The stranger of yesternight,  
And her soft eyes showed more blue  
As the rose on her cheek grew bright ;  
And, some power impelling me, I—  
I who was always counted so shy—  
I walked by her side a little, though I know  
That my tongue was tied and my brain was slow ;  
But however it was, yet her eyes were blue,  
And her roses all aglow.



And I walked by her side till she came  
To the cottage door, where we parted,  
And a mingling of pride and of shame  
Rose and left me awhile half-hearted.  
I to stoop to a simple girl,  
The child of a peasant sire !  
Though the gown of the clergyman hides many faults,  
Surely 'twas mine to aspire.  
What would they say—my friends,  
The pale students, polished and proud,  
If I, the first of them, stooped to take  
A wife from the vulgar crowd?  
Or she, my dear mother, whose pride  
Lies hid so deep in the depths of her heart,  
There is scarcely one of us knows it is there ?  
Or my father, the Earl, to whom life is no more  
Than a long procession of hound and horse,

To whom hardly dishonour itself seems worse  
Than to wed out of one's degree?

And I wandered out over the hill  
For an hour of doubt or more,  
And then, as it happened, my feet drew near  
To that humble cottage door ;  
And I saw her come forth with a child on her arm,  
Pale-faced and hollow-eyed,  
And she seemed a pagan goddess no more,  
But a fair Madonna, with all the charm  
Of the Sistine or of the Chair.

And then, as over the hill  
We walked back again, though her voice was still,  
Surely was never a man so full  
Of chattering talk as I.  
But she was not angry at all, not she ;

But from that calm vantage of wise eighteen,  
And with only a modest word or so,  
And a sweet voice, and musical accent low,  
She would bend her delicate ear to me,  
And listen, as grave and as calm as a queen,  
To the talk which meant little enough, maybe,  
But was understood, I ween.

But however it was, I know  
When we came to the gate, and her little hand  
Slid shyly out, as she wished me good-bye,  
That as I turned to go  
My feet seemed winged on the slope of the hills,  
And I hardly knew that the cold half-sleet  
Which blots the clouded mountain and chills  
The unsheltered wayfarer, wrapping me round,  
Had drenched me. For up the silent street  
Of the darkling village, jubilant sound

c

Compassed me ; sunlight beamed on me still ;  
And even to my high inn-chamber I seemed  
To be treading that breezy hill.

---

What is the charm which wakes  
The bud, the flower, the fruit, from the cold ground ?  
What is the power which makes  
With song the groves, with song the fields, resound ?  
One spell there is, so strong to move ;  
Some call it Spring, and others Love.

I thought my heart lay dead—  
Sad heart, long buried deep in dusty lore !—

But now, the winter fled,  
It beats with quicker beat than e'er before.—  
A simple girl, yet can she move  
Spring in my soul, the Spring of Love !

Strange fable that they taught  
Of old, of souls divided as in twain,  
Each by the other sought  
Until the sundered reunite again,  
And then the severed members move,  
Knit by the magic spell of Love !

Ah, let us be at one,  
Dear soul, if one we be, and are of kin  
Before the world begun ;  
Sure 'tis that I was made thy soul to win.  
Ah, child, if we might upward move,  
Borne on the golden wings of Love !

## SCENE III.

What is it the village leech  
Tells me of fever and chill,  
And bids me keep warm? Well, it perhaps were wise ;  
For I fail to sleep, and my limbs are as lead,  
And a throb of painfulness splits my head,  
And they warned me of this, I remember, again and  
again.

But surely I know that, came rain or wind,  
If only my weary limbs could reach  
To that little gate on the breezy hill  
And I saw the desire of my eyes,  
I should take little thought of myself, not I,  
Not even were I doomed to die.

## SCENE IV.

What is this? And where am I?  
This is not the high inn-chamber, I know,  
This white little room where the sunset-glow  
On the white bed-curtains, as I lie,  
Makes orange shadows which fade and fleet ;  
Nor are these my first nurse's reluctant feet  
Which steal so lightly and daintily round,  
As if grudging the faintest ghost of a sound ;  
Nor was the soft voice I heard  
Last night, when the curtain was silently stirred,  
The village doctor's at all :  
I have heard it before, but when, I cannot recall.

For there comes a sense on my brain  
Of time that is gone but has left no trace  
But days which passed and left nothing behind,  
Yet upon the secret depths of the mind  
Are graven that nought may erase.  
As the patient metal retains the sound  
Of the living voice that is dead,  
Even so doth my being retain  
A long procession of days and nights,  
Weary and suffering and heavily sped ;  
And then for a moment the cool air strikes,  
As some one carries me tenderly down,  
And slowly the wheels of my litter climb,  
Leaving the streets of the little town,  
Up the hill through the scented pines.

And then all is blank for a time ;



A long time, surely, when nothing came  
But wandering dreams and a whispered name, “  
Repeated often and like a charm,  
To keep off fancied phantoms of harm.  
“Gwen,” was it? Somewhere I seem to recall,  
Far away in some world of forgotten things,  
A fair young face which I loved to see ;  
And one night in this room it smiled on me,  
And the ghastly shapes spread their horrible wings  
And left me at rest for a while.

---

Ah, no ! I did not dream it at all,  
For now for a week she comes every day,  
A young nurse, virginal, white, and tall,  
And her father, the vicar, whose rough face beams  
With a genial kindness he cannot speak ;  
For if ever he ventures a word, it is gall  
To one who is peevish and weak,  
And his words struggle out like stones in a stream,  
Jerked together, and jostled, and battered away,  
Till I long that he had done.

But she, my Artemis pure and fair,  
My Madonna, who stood at the cottage gate—  
She is perfect, I hold, from the crown of her hair  
To the dainty sole of her delicate foot ;  
And her hand and her voice are as soft as silk,  
And she comes hour by hour with a tender care,  
With my draught or my food, or with rich cool milk.  
Ah ! if only—— What, am I then worse than the brute,  
That I stoop to thoughts that I loathe and hate—  
I, a great peer's only son ?

For I see on the walls of my simple room,  
Which I know was her own, the work of her hand,  
At night, in the firelight's flickering gloom,  
This text emblazoned in letters of gold—  
“ For whom Christ dièd.” Ah, if indeed  
His words were the words of a real doom,  
And his faith the faith of a living creed !

But now souls and beliefs are bargained and sold,  
There is no belief by which men may stand,  
There is neither creed nor God.

But whether there be or be not indeed,  
It shall not change me or move my mind.  
Shall I who hate to see weak things bleed,  
From the hare which shrieks, to the trout on the hook,  
Play false with the simple heart of a maid,  
Till her poor soul pines for a new-born need ?  
I dare not do it ; I am afraid  
To see the young soul, with a terrible look,  
Go out for the truth which it cannot find  
By dark ways, of truth untrod.

She shall keep unassailed her young innocent heart,  
For aught to be whispered by me or done ;  
She shall hold her faith ; but 'tis best we part,

For hearts break daily and white lives fade,  
And 'twere better indeed I had never been born,  
Than to bring a young life to sorrow and woe,  
And leave a pure saint to the cold world's scorn,  
Shrinking back from the wreck which myself had made.  
No, of all the wrong-doing beneath the sun,  
Not this one be mine, oh God !

---

White room ! white curtain ! little bed  
That once was hers, whereon she lay  
So warm and still, her sunny head  
Safe pillowed till the growing day !

I bless you and I love you all.  
I feel so young who once seemed old.  
I see a lithe girl-figure, tall,  
With grave blue eyes and hair of gold,

Stand by the half-closed door when he,  
The village doctor, yesternight,

Came stealthily and looked on me,  
With noiseless step and shaded light ;

And I, who in a lethargy  
Seemed buried, to a careless eye,  
Lay all unmoved, till suddenly  
I caught the echo of a sigh,

And, looking up, beheld my dear,  
The first love of my weary heart,  
Stand pitiful, and marked the tear  
In the soft eye unbidden start.

Yet no prognostics dire they were  
He launched against me ; only these :  
Torpor and weakness, needing care  
And watchfulness for remedies ;

And, seeing that I saw and heard,  
Turned to me with a cheerful face,  
And spoke some random hopeful word,  
And nodded smiling to the place,

Where stood the stair. But I, I knew  
A sudden rush of hope and strength,  
And cared not when, if but at length,  
My new-born thought should turn out true.

---



## SCENE V.

Oh, joy ! I grow stronger day by day ;  
And day by day in the sweet summer weather  
I wander over the hills, and away  
High up 'mid the purple masses of heather,  
Till mounting aloft with no one by,  
All in the bountiful summer weather,  
I drink in new life from every pore,  
Throbbing and bourgeoning more and more  
In every limb and with every breath,  
As, laid on the heather, I watch the sky  
And the purple shadows on sea and hill,

And hear no sound but the bee's deep hum,  
And watch the shy mountain-sheep timidly come,  
And the kestrel circling, aloft on the rocky brow,  
Fulfilling the marvellous mission of Death and of Pain.  
Death ! ah, but that is far from me now,  
Vanished with Pain and its legions of Ill.  
I can walk with my limbs, I can leap, I can run ;  
I rejoice in my strength : the day of weakness is done.  
I live, I grow strong ; I am one with the World and with  
Life again.

And sometimes, rare blessing, there comes with me  
A fair young Oread over the hill,  
Fearless and free from a thought of ill.  
For her mother, who came of gentler blood,  
Who was always delicate, kind, and good—  
Her mother died long ago, and she  
Has lived from her childhood fearless and free.

I think no thought of passion as yet  
Has touched her. Only pity made wet  
Her eyes on that night which awoke my love.  
I am only a friend more mature and wise  
Than any she knows, and a shamed surprise  
Would wake in the sapphire depths of her eyes,  
If she saw what blind and passionate longings move  
Within the hidden thoughts of a man.  
Ah, well ! but nature is twofold, and sure  
It were not wise to ban  
The instincts which are neither gross nor pure.  
Let him suppress them who can.  
It is only in thought I invade her virginal peace,  
For I know that this sweet rehearsal of love must cease.  
For I am not my own ; but my wife to be,  
Stately and beautiful, waits for me  
With that which suffices to build up our shattered wealth.  
Ay, but what if love, awaking and coming by stealth,

D

Should bind me in chains on this wild Welsh hill?  
Or hurry me downward, downward, to fathomless ill?  
Tush! how should I be a devil if there be not a God?  
I am only a young man in whom the young blood  
Pulses quickly, and have I no gratitude  
For the life which she saved, the life which is grown so  
    sweet,  
As we roam o'er these breeze-swept uplands with rapid  
    young feet?  
Oh, joy! I am one with the life of the hills, and the skies,  
    and of man!

---

## SCENE VI.

It is done ! I have told her I love her,  
Yester-eve as we walked together,  
Some power grown tyrannous holding me fast,  
Blotting alike the Future and Past ;  
And for answer she gave but a sigh and a start,  
And a blush as bright as the purple heather,  
And a little flutter of bosom and heart,  
And a glow like the hues of the sunset above her.  
Oh, fair ash-grove where I told my love !  
Fair ash-grove dear to Cymric verse

Since their bard who sang thee when Chaucer was  
young !

Fairest of groves that were ever sung !

Oh, fairest sunset of all that have shone

Since man first woke in Paradise garden,

Before the temptation, the ruin, the curse,

Before the strange story was over and done,

And man an outcast hopeless of pardon !

As we sat on the mossy bank, she and I,

And no creature was near with intrusive eye,

To mark our innocent joy !

Sweet day when love awakens and stands,

With his free limbs bare and his stretched-out hands,

Before two young shame-fast natures which yearn

With innocent yearning : clear fires that burn

Free from all baser alloy.

It is done ; it is over ; and never Eve,

The mother of maidens who love and grieve,

Looked fairer than did Gwen,  
This peasant maiden, when first she heard  
The one ineffable, passionate word  
Which stirs for ever the hearts of maidens and of men.

---

    The bud on the bough,  
    The song of the bird,  
    The blue river-reaches  
    By soft breezes stirred ;  
    Oh, soul, and hast thou found again thy  
        treasure ?  
    Oh, world, and art thou once more filled  
        with pleasure ?

Oh, world, hast thou passed

Thy sad winter again ?

Oh, soul, hast thou cast

Thy dull vesture of pain ?

Oh ! winter, sad wert thou and full of sorrow ;

Oh soul, oh world, the summer comes to-morrow !

Oh, soul ! 'tis love quickens

Time's languorous feet ;

Oh, world ! 'tis Spring wakens

Thy fair blossoms sweet ;

Fair world, fair soul, that lie so close together,

Each with sad wintry days and fair Spring weather !

---



As on the clear hill-sides we walked together,  
A gleam of purple passed over the sea,  
And, glad with the joy of the summer weather,  
My love turned quickly and looked on me.  
Ah, the glad summer weather, the fair summer weather !  
Ah, the purple shadow on hill and sea !

And I looked in her eyes as we walked together,  
And knew the shy secret she fain would hide,  
And we went hand in hand through the blossoming  
    heather,  
She who now was my sweetheart, and I by her side ;  
For the shade was the shadow of Love's wing-feather, 't  
Which bares, as he rises, the secrets we hide.

Now, come cloud or sunshine, come joy or weeping,  
It can be no longer as 'twas before.

Just a shadow of change o'er the soul comes creeping,  
And farewell to the joyaunce and freedom of yore ;  
For it crosses Love's face, where he lies a-sleeping,  
And he soars awaking, nor slumbers more.

---

I have found her !  
At last, after long wanderings, dull delays,  
I have found her ;  
And all my life is tuned to joy and praise.  
I have found her !

A myriad-myriad times  
In man's long history this thing has been ;  
All ages, climes,  
This daily, hourly miracle have seen  
A myriad-myriad times ;

Yet is it new to-day.

I have found her, and a new spring glads my eyes.

World, fair and gay

As when Eve woke in dewy Paradise,

Fade not away !

Fade not, oh light,

Lighting the eyes of yet another pair,

But let my sight

Find her as I have found her, pure and fair !

Shine, mystic light !

---

Yes, it is sweet to be  
Awaited, and to know another heart  
Beats faster for our coming, and to see  
The blush unbidden start  
To the fair cheek, and mark young Love's alarms  
Perturb and make more fair the girlish charms.

I am once more  
A young man with the passions of my kind ;  
I am no pedant, glorying as before  
In barren realms of mind.  
The springtide that awakens land and sea,  
The Spring of Youth and Love, awakens me.

It calls, and all my life  
Answers from its dim depths, "I come, I hear."  
It breaks, it bursts, in sudden hope and strife,  
And precious chills of fear.  
It comes with tremulous, furtive thrills which can  
Strip from me all the Past, and leave me, man.

---

## SCENE VII.

GWEN.

Dear hills, dear vales, how calm and bright

Ye show in morning's early light !

Dear woods and uplands cool and wild,

Where yesterday I walked a child,

I love you, but I roam no more

With all the careless joy of yore.

My girlish days are past and done ;

I know my womanhood begun.

What was it one so wise could see

In an untutored child like me ?

What was it? Nay, 'twere sin to prove  
By earthy tests the ways of love.  
Whate'er it was, Love's perfect way  
Is without doubting to obey.

I do obey. I lay my soul  
Low at Love's feet for his control.  
Farewell, oh paths half hidden in flowers,  
Trodden by young feet in childish hours ;  
White bed, white room, and girlish home !  
The hour of Love and Life is come !

I shall not watch as yesterday  
The orange sunset fade to gray,  
Nor roam unfettered as the bee,  
A maiden heart and fancy free.  
I am bound by such a precious chain  
I may not wander forth again.



Oh, bond divine ! oh, sweet, sweet chain !

Oh, mingling of ecstatic pain !

I am a simple girl no more.

I would not have it as before.

One day of love, one brief, sweet day,

And all my past is swept away.

---

Oh, vermeil rose and sweet,

Rose with the golden heart of hidden fire,

Bear thou my yearning soul to him I love,

Bear thou my longing and desire.

Glide safe, oh sweet, sweet rose,

By fairy-fall and cliff and mimic strand,

To where he muses by the sleeping stream,

Then eddy to his hand.

Drown not, oh vermeil rose,  
But from thy dewy petals let a tear  
Fall soft for joy when thou shalt know the touch  
And presence of my dear.

Tell him, oh sweet, sweet rose,  
That I grow fixed no more, nor flourish now  
In the sweet maiden garden-ground of old,  
But severed even as thou.

Say from thy golden heart,  
From virgin folded leaf and odorous breath,  
That I am his to wear or cast away,  
His own in life or death.

---

Thy shadow, oh tardy night,  
Creeps onward by valley and hill,  
And scarce to my straining sight  
Show the white road-reaches still.  
Oh, night, stay now a little, little space,  
And let me see the light of my beloved's face !

My love is late, oh night,  
And what has kept him away ?  
For I know that he takes not delight  
In the garish joys of day.  
Haste, night, dear night that bring'st my love to me !  
What if his footsteps halt and tarry but for thee ?

E

Nay, what if his footsteps slide  
By the swaying bridge of pine,  
And whirled seaward by the tide  
Is the loved form I counted mine !  
Oh, night, dear night that comest yet dost not come,  
How shall I wait the hour that brings my darling home ?

---

✓ Fair star that on the shoulder of yon hill  
Peepest, a little eye of tranquil night,  
Come forth. Nor sun nor moon there is to kill  
Thy ray with broader light.  
Shine, star of eve that art so bright and clear ;  
Shine, little star, and bring my lover here !

My lover ! oh, fair word for maid to hear !  
My lover who was yesterday my friend !  
Oh, strange we did not know before how near  
Our stream of life smoothed to its fated end !  
Shine, star of eve, as Love's self, bright and clear ;  
Shine, little star, and bring my lover here !

He comes ! I hear the echo of his feet.  
He comes ! I fear to stay, I cannot go.  
Oh, Love, that thou art shame-fast, bitter-sweet,  
Mingled with pain, and conversant with woe !  
Shine, star of eve, more bright as night draws near ;  
Shine, little star, and bring my lover here !

---

What shall I do for my love,  
Who is so tender  
And dear and true,  
Loving and true and tender,  
My strength and my defender—  
What shall I do ?

I will cleave unto my love,  
Who am too lowly  
For him to take.  
With a self-surrender holy  
I will cleave unto him solely ;  
I will give my being wholly  
For his dear sake.

## ACT II.





## SCENE I.

HENRY.

Only a little week  
Of meetings under the star,  
Since the blissful evening I dared to speak,  
Sweet evening that seems so far !  
And already the cruel post brings me word  
That my mother the countess, who, far away  
At a German bath with her ailing lord,  
Has been dreaming the early autumn away,  
Returns to-day, and to-morrow will come  
To take the invalid leisurely home.

Ah, mother ! I fear that your pride will scorn  
That your son should mate with a lowly bride,  
Though a vicar's daughter is well enough born  
For all but a foolish pride.

And I know, moreover, your heart is set  
On her to whom no word is spoken yet,  
The lofty heiress who comes to restore  
Our house to the splendours of yore.  
Poor mother, your patience was sadly tried  
By the studious fancies which kept me apart  
From the London which now seems to hold your heart ;  
And, alas ! I hardly know how to face  
The blank amaze of your haughty gaze,  
The cold surprise of patrician eyes,  
As you listen to my disgrace.

Disgrace, did I say ? Ah ! where

In all the bewildering town  
Is any as Gwen is, fair  
Or comely, or high or pure?  
Or when did a countess's coronet crown  
A head with a brighter glory of hair?  
Or how could titular rank insure  
A mind and a heart so sweet?  
They shall not shame me to cheat or beguile  
My darling, my queen, my treasure,  
Nor blot from my soul the pure pleasure  
Of the brief hours that have been.  
And if indeed I must go for a while,  
It shall not be for long, but a little while ;  
And then I will haste back again with passionate feet,  
To bask again in her smile.  
I must tell her all to-night, sweet to-night, when we meet.

---

## SCENE II.

I have seen her once again,  
I have seen her again, my dear.  
And oh, but parting was a bitter pain !  
And oh, the ready, child-like tear !  
I did not know, even I, before,  
With how immense and ponderous a chain  
Love binds the girlish heart, and holds it evermore.

For I hardly know at all  
How it came to be, but as we two spoke  
Of parting and absence her sweet voice broke,

And she paled and wavered as if to fall ;  
And 'twas only a ready encircling arm,  
And lip to lip in a close embrace,  
That brought back the rose to her troubled face,  
And recalled the wandering life from its swift alarm.  
Dear young soul that Fate has given me to hold,  
And shall I forsake thee, come weal or woe ?  
No, I will not betray thy sweet trustfulness ; no,  
Not for millions of gems and gold.

But before I left her and went  
My way to the inn, while the village street  
Echoed loud with the rhythmical wheels and feet  
Of my mother's chariot, we vowed together  
That, whatever the changes of life and weather,  
We would cling to each other and never part ;  
And so I, the round of festivities done,  
And the pheasants all killed and the county won,

Will steal from my gilded trammels, and come  
To the Welsh hillside which is now my home,  
And the child who has my heart.

---

Was ever a girlish heart so fair  
As Gwen's, or free from earth?  
She is pure and innocent, I swear,  
As an infant at the birth.  
She is full, indeed, of much old-world lore,  
From the lessons her mother taught her of yore ;  
Mozart's sweet melodies loves to rehearse,  
And many a tome of forgotten verse ;  
And something of modern letters she knows,

And oft in fancy with Elaine goes,  
As she floateth lifeless to Camelot.  
But of wrong and evil she knoweth not.  
She knows no more of the ways of men,  
Their deceits, their treacheries,  
Or of coarse, bold women,—my little Gwen,  
With the clear, deep, trusting eyes—  
Than if you should come by some Arctic main,  
Where a world of ice shuts humanity out ;  
On some simple forgotten colony,  
Which had never heard of the world or wealth ;  
Or a convent set on a scarpèd hill.  
Tush ! but they would corrupt each other, no doubt,  
Or some echo of evil would creep in by stealth.  
But for Gwen the pure cold stream of her will  
Flows along the mountain-side, taking no stain,  
Crystal-clear, reflecting its kindred sky.  
Was ever a soul so fair ?

Forget me not, dear soul ! Yet wherefore speak  
The words of freedom, where the thing is not ?  
Forget me not ! And yet how poor and weak  
My prayer, who know that nothing is forgot !  
Low voice, or kindling eye, or glowing cheek,  
Forget them not !

Forget me only if forgetting prove  
Oblivion of low aims and earthy thought ;  
Forget the blinder appetites which move  
Through secret ways, by lower nature taught ;  
Forget them, love !



Remember only, with fond memory,  
The exaltation, the awakened soul,  
Swift moments strong to bind my heart to thee,  
Strong tides of passionate faith which scorn control—  
In these remember me !

---

Dear child so sweet in maidenhood,  
How should I doubt, regarding thee,  
A secret spring of hidden Good,  
Which rules all things and bids them be ?

Dear soul, so guileless and so pure,  
So innocent and free from stain,

As 'twere untempted Eve again,  
I lean upon thee and grow sure.

I love no more the barren quest,  
The doubt I cherished I despise ;  
I am a little while at rest,  
Seeing the Godhead in thine eyes.

Can good be, yet no Giver? Can  
The stream flow on, yet own no source?  
From what deep well of hidden Force  
Flows the diviner stream in man?

I know not. Some there is, 'tis clear,  
A mystery of mysteries.  
Thy youth has gazed upon it, dear,  
And bears its image in thine eyes.

Yes, God there is. Too far to know,  
It may be, yet directing all.  
It is enough ; we spring, we grow,  
We ripen, we decay, we fall,

To a great Will. No empty show  
Of aimless and unmeaning ends  
Our life is, but the overflow  
Of a great Spring which always tends

To a great Deep. The silver thread  
Between the Fountain and the Sea  
We are for ever, quick or dead,  
And Source and Ending both are He.

It is enough—no more I know ;  
But maybe from thy faithful eyes,

Thy trust that knows no chill, thy glow  
Of meek and daily sacrifice,

I may relearn the legend fair  
I whispered at my mother's keee,  
And seeing Godhead everywhere,  
Confess, "And this man too was He."

---

## SCENE III.

GWEN.

Oh, happy days so lately done,  
And yet removed so far away,  
Before our passion-tide begun  
And life's young May !  
Shy early days of sun and showers,  
When all the paths were hidden in flowers  
Tender and sweet,  
And on the mountain-side the year,  
With girlish change of smile and tear,  
Tripped with light feet ;

---

And by the melting snows the violet came,  
And on the wolds the crocus like a saffron flame !

Daily some song of lonely bird,  
By tufted field or tasselled grove,  
From the clear dawn to solemn eve was heard,  
But few of love.  
Nay, rather virginal flutings pure and clear,  
Passionless preludes, ah, how dear !  
Nor yet upon the nest,  
The bright-eyed fearless mother sate,  
Nor yet high in mid-heaven her soaring mate  
Thrilled his full breast,  
Nor yet within the white domain of song  
Love burst with eyes aglow the maiden choir among.

But when the fuller summer shone,  
Soon as the perfumed rose had come,

Lo, all the reign of song was done,  
The birds all dumb ;  
And for the choir which did before rejoice, ✓  
Low, tuneless accents of an anxious voice  
Weighed down with care,  
And dim forebodings choking the high note  
Which once resounded from the joyous throat  
So full and fair.  
I would not lose my love which is so dear,  
But 'tis oh the parted days of the imperfect year ! ✓

---

Oh, soft dove gently cooing  
To thy mate upon her nest,  
And hast thou known undoing  
And deep unrest?  
And does any pain of wooing  
Wring thy soft breast?

Oh, pale flower ever turning  
To thy great lord the sun,  
And dost thou know a yearning  
Which is never done,  
For the tardy summer burning  
And June begun?



Ah, heart ! there is no pleasure  
As thine, nor grief.  
Time Future holds the treasure ;  
Time Past, the thief.  
What power brings this one, measure.  
Or that, relief?

---

Ah ! 'tis not very long  
Since I was light and free,  
And of all the burden of pain and wrong  
No echo reached to me ;  
But day by day, upon this breeze-swept hill,  
Far from the too great load of human ill,

---

I lived within the sober walls of home,  
Safe-set, nor heard the sound of outward evil come.

It is not that I know,  
By word or any deed,  
What depths of misery lie below,  
What hearts that bleed ;  
But, since I have felt the music of my soul  
Touched by another's mastering hand,  
I seem to hear unfathomed oceans roll,  
As when a child I saw the Atlantic lash the strand.

Oh, mother, who art dead  
So long beneath the grass,  
Lift up once more, lift thy beloved head  
When we two pass,  
And tell me—tell me if this passionate pain,  
This longing, this ineffable desire

For one I know so lately, be the gain  
To which young maids aspire.  
Is this to love, to kiss my chain and feel  
A dominant will to which 'tis joy to kneel?

Oh, mother, I am a maid ;  
I am young, I know not men.  
My great joy makes me shrink and be afraid.  
It is not now as then  
When first we walked together on the hill.  
I take no longer, thought for any soul  
Of those I loved before and cherish still ;  
I care not for the poor, the blind, the lame ;  
I care not for the organ's solemn roll,  
Or sabbath hymn and prayers, who am burnt as of a flame.

---

Nay, love ! how can I doubt thee  
Who art so dear,  
Though I pine away without thee  
In the fading year ?  
The ash flings down its leaf, the heather  
Is bloomless in the autumn weather ;  
The mountain paths are wet with rime,  
Where we together eve by eve  
Would wander in the joyous time,  
Fair hours when thy returning strength  
Came with the days' increasing length.

I pace alone the dear familiar road  
Where first we met. I walk alone ;  
I have no aim nor purpose, none—  
Only to think of those soft days and still believe.

Last evening, on a distant hill,  
A wreath of cloud-mist dealing sleet  
Compassed my homeward steps, as still  
I toiled with weary feet.  
Oh, what if the snow, like a winding-sheet,  
Had stayed the steps of my life and my troubled will,  
And closed on me for ever, concluding there  
My little hopes and joys, and maybe my despair !

Nay, I will not doubt him nor be afraid ;  
He is all that is good, I know it, tender and true.  
But I fear he is higher in rank than he said ;  
For one day, I remember it well, as he lay

---

Very weak on his bed, a letter came  
Coronet-blazoned, and half in shame  
I lifted my eyes, and he saw I knew,  
And his face grew troubled and never more  
Was his gaze as frank as it was before.  
Tender it was, indeed, and ardent and true,  
But not as frank as before.

But I count the days till he comes again ;  
I long for him with a dull, deep pain.  
I will do whatever thing my love commands ;  
I will go or stay ; I am taken as a bird in his hands.  
Oh, love, my love ! tarry not long ;  
I am not happy nor strong.

---

Delay not, love ; the sun has lost his fire.  
Stay not ; the cold earth loses light and heat,  
Summer is gone, and Winter with cold feet  
Chills all the world's desire.

Come back, and coming bring back Spring with thee,  
Spring for my heart though all the world lie dead ;  
My life will burst in blossom at thy tread—  
Oh, love, come back to me !





## ACT III.



## SCENE I.

HENRY.

Once more upon these dear familiar hills  
I tread ; 'tis autumn now, 'twas summer then.  
The valley paths are deep in mire ; the leaf  
Falls sadly from the bough ; the village inn,  
So noisy then, when four months since I lay  
'Twixt life and death, is silent ; a gray mist  
Hangs o'er the breathless valley. All the hills  
Are clouded, on whose summits a thin cowl  
Of snowflakes sits at times. Summer is dead ;  
A sad autumnal stillness over all  
The dull world broods, and in my heart I know  
Summer is dead—sweet summer, ah, too brief !

G

For now, alas ! I know

What folly 'twas that kept me here

Three little months ago.

I have drunk deep since then of cups that cheer,

The sea of eyes, the beat of popular hands,

When to his thought the high-set platform reels,

As now the solitary speaker stands

Poised like a swimmer on high waves, who feels

The world cut off from him and knows

To fail is ruin. I have known

Men better since, and felt how near

And yet far off are clown and peer ;

And known how better than all lore,

Better than love itself, and more,  
How satisfying and how great,  
It is to aid the ship of state,  
The labouring ship which reels and goes  
Athwart the ranks of watching foes.  
And best of all I know  
How baseless was my sweet Arcadian dream.  
I could not bear—I know it well—  
To live retired from the central stream  
Of life, as if in a hermit's cell.  
I long for the hurry, the passion, the glow  
Of full life lived in the eyes of men ;  
I can bear no longer to dream in inglorious ease.  
A great name, the voice of the people, authority, these  
Are more than my simple Gwen.  
  
Ay, and I have learnt besides,  
What I scarce suspected before,

By what poor expedients my father has striven  
To keep the wolf from his door—  
Bubble schemes, mine-ventures which came to nought,  
And some senseless bet on some swindling race,  
And I know not what gambling follies beside.  
But I know that our lawyer, with long-drawn face,  
Came to me with secret warnings of ill,  
And hints that a prudent marriage alone could fill  
The coffers so nearly empty, again.  
Poor father ! it was not right, for your dreams of gain,  
And your pompous life and wasteful, orderless state,  
To diminish a family hoard that was never great ;  
But I know that if the blow he hinted should come,  
And the Jew and the broker harried our ancient home,  
It would kill you and drive my mother distraught.  
Nay, I could not bear to see it. My path is clear ;  
I must see you once more and leave you, my love, my  
dear.

## SCENE II.

I did not know it, I swear ;

I did not dream that a young girl, fair and free,

Could long care for one grave and studious and worn  
like me.

I thought our brief passion was dead ;

I thought I had schooled my heart to obey my head ;

But when I saw her, she showed so fair,—

It was just at the self-same spot where we used to meet,—

That I hastened up the steep path with wings to my feet ;

And she did not see me at first, but stood for a while

Silent and musing and still, with a sweet half-smile,

As if bent on some mingled vision of joy and pain,  
And I knew that our love was not dead, but slept and-  
awoke again.

But when at length she turned her eyes,  
With a beautiful, pitiful look of surprise,  
And a questing glance, and a shiver and a start,  
Oh, 'twas then that she touched my heart !  
And before a moment passes again we stand,  
With eyes on each other bent, and hand linked to hand ;  
And with hardly a spoken word, we are face to face,  
Strained together again in a close embrace ;  
And I failed, I failed to tell her what should have been  
told,  
For the heart of a maid is higher than rank or gold.

But to-night I must speak and tell her all,  
I must tell her though the sky fall.



## SCENE III.

It is over, it is done.

She from the clear frank depths of her maidenly pride :

“ Dear, it is sudden indeed, but I thought it would come,  
For I doubt if any are happy under the sun.

But you, you shall not imperil the pride of your home ;

I know you a fitting mate for a loftier bride.

I will love you and pray for you always. And now  
good-bye.

Be good, my dear, to your wife. But I

Have awoke from my dream in time, and will tend

My poor, who, I fear, have missed a friend ;

And my father is growing old, and will want me here.

Fear not, I shall not be unhappy. Farewell, my dear !”  
And she went with feet as swift as the bounding roe,  
And vanished before I knew she was minded to go,  
And left me alone with the dying day in the fading year.

---

I cannot leave her thus ; I must see her again,  
Though I know it is cruel to both and renewal of pain.  
But all night long have I lain awake,  
Tossing and fevered for her dear sake,  
As when she nursed me to life in her little room ;

And once, when I dozed a moment, I seemed to hear  
Her sweet voice calling aloud in accents of fear,  
Calling my name in a voice which sank to a moan ;  
And, though I know it was dreaming fancy alone,  
I cannot leave her thus. I am harassed with fears ;  
I must see her again ; I must write. And lo ! through the  
gloom  
The slow dawn of autumn breaks in mist and in tears.

---

Dear, I must see you again.  
Bring with you the last sweet rose  
Which lingers still in your garden-ground,  
The last red summer rose.

Do you mind how you sent me a rose  
Along the swift streamlet's flow,  
A sweet and a blushing rose?  
It is faded—'twas long ago.

Come, dear. A dream visited me  
In the weary vigilant night ;

I heard your voice calling to me  
In grievous pain and affright.

I must see you. The swift wheels stay  
At the spot we have known of yore ;  
Be there, ere they bear me away  
From my love for evermore.

---

## SCENE IV.

GWEN.

The light has gone out of my life,

Yet I will not repine.

Nay, 'tis well to have passed betimes through the struggle  
and strife.

Shall I grieve that he comes not again,

That my love is not mine?

Ah, folly ! the whole creation travails in pain.

I will live my own life once more ;

I will succour the weak ;

I will be but a little more grave than I was before.

I will strive to repay the deep love  
My fond father fails to speak ;  
Though the path may be lonely and drear, yet the  
    heavens are above.

Ah ! my love who no longer art mine,  
Yet my love till I die,  
I will strive to be patient and strong, but I wither and  
    pine.

---

A letter from my love,  
In the well-remembered hand,  
Once again, yet we have parted ;  
'Tis hard to understand.

A letter from my love !  
Dear letter, and what says he ?  
“ I am going away for ever.  
Come once more, dear to me,

“ And with you bring a rose.”—  
My love, I will be there ;



I will bring you a red, red rosebud  
Upon your heart to wear.

But you must not crush it, dear,  
Or bind it to you too fast,  
Or the poor flower's scent, I fear,  
Will bring back to you the Past.

Wear your rose lightly, dear,  
( For ornament or pleasure ;  
But the virgin rose of a maiden's heart  
Keep safe as a precious treasure.



## ACT IV.

**H**



## SCENE I.

HENRY.

How weak are we and blind !

How ignorant of fate !

For I thought I was steadfast and firm, and knew my  
mind,

Till I saw her at the gate ;

And next day, as soon as the train rolled on and I sat  
alone,

I wished that I had not written to give her pain,

And I prayed that she might not come, nor might I see  
her again.

But when the swift wheels slackened and grew still

At the little wayside station beyond the hill,

There alone by the platform stood my treasure, my dear,  
Very pale, with a rose in her hand ; full of maidenly fear.  
And I sprang out to her, and we whispered ardent and  
low,

With sad hearts throbbing together and cheeks aglow,  
For a precious minute or two, till the signal to go ;  
And then, all my youth and my love rising up like a  
flame,

I whispered, " I cannot leave you, my love, my bride.  
Come to me, my own, my wife ! "

And lo ! as in a trance,  
With a shiver and tottering limbs, and a pitiful glance,  
As one who walked in a dream, she obeyed and came  
Constrained, and sank fainting down in her place at my  
side.

There she lay long time on my breast, very pale and chill,  
And I trembled to see her poor white face, my dear ;

And the swift train had sped us long miles, when, with  
something of fear,

She said quickly, "Where am I?" And I: "With your  
husband to be.

We are long miles away from your home. You will trust  
me, my own?"

And she moaned, "Ah! how could I leave my father  
alone?

Poor father! Ah! what will they think of me when they  
know?

They will deem me unmaidenly—bold. Let me go. We  
were mad;

It is nothing to women to wither and pine and be sad.

Let me go. It is better. Some weakness constrained  
me to come.

I will go and be happy, fear not, with my equals at home."

But I soothed her, and flashed a message to say she was  
well,

And to promise a letter next day, telling all that there  
was to tell ;

And she lay like a child on my heart, with her head bent  
wearily down,

And lo ! on the autumn twilight, the glare and the  
turmoil of town.

---

I hold him wrong who opens wide

The secret, sacred doors of love,

The paths by shame-fast footsteps tried,

The mazes of the enchanted grove.



I hold him wrong ; but Gwen my wife  
Is dearer even than Gwen the maid.  
We walk by hidden deeps of life,  
And no man maketh us afraid.

I hold him wrong ; but who can prize  
At its full worth the love he gains,  
Till bound by mutual sacrifice,  
Till fused by mutual joys and pains ?

Too happy are the halcyon days ;  
For Time the taker, Time the thief,  
Steals ghostlike down the flowery ways,  
And makes the blessed moments brief.

---

I have left her oftentimes for a while,  
And then, on some pretext hastily found,  
Have hurried back to bask in her smile ;  
But now I am here fast bound,  
For my father is failing, day by day,  
And 'tis hard to keep the harpies at bay,  
Who would enter and turn him from house and home.  
They must not suspect that I, who am alone  
The mainstay on which they depend to secure their own,  
Am not the lover of one who brings lands and wealth,  
But bound to a penniless girl whom I wedded by stealth ;  
They must not dream it ; and therefore here must I stay,  
Though I seem indeed to lose every day

That keeps me away from my love.

Dear soul, it is springtime again, and fresh currents move  
Through the world, and stir the life in blossom and tree,  
And the little hidden life which ere long shall be.

---

## SCENE II.

GWEN.

Dear love, I will be patient, yet  
I long to see you, and I fear  
Lest absence lead you to forget  
The things that once were dear.

You tell me we awhile must hide  
Our union safe from prying eyes,  
But when your ailing father dies  
You will proclaim me as your bride.

I long that this might be, nor wait  
The death of any. I have been  
These last six months, 'spite love and fate,  
Dearest, as happy as a queen.

But now another dearer life  
Forbids my careless patience more.  
Pray God it may not come before  
I am acknowledged for your wife.

---

I did not know,  
When I walked careless on the hills,  
The magnitude of human ills ;  
But neither could I know  
To what full height our happiness can grow.

Sing, caged bird, sing !  
Is this your constant strain ?  
I would, I would that I were free ;  
I would, I would, I would that I were once again  
Sitting alone within a leafy tree ;  
I would that I might be  
Breathing free air far from this gilded pain.

Ah, bird ! I would be free  
As you, for I weary here.  
And yet, my bird, I have one so dear, so dear,  
That, if he might only bide with me,  
I should no longer care  
To change this stifling, fettered air  
For the free mountain-breathings fresh and far.

---

Cold east and drear,  
Your chill breath wraps the world in cheerless gray.  
Sad east, while thou art here,  
Life creeps with halting feet its weary way.  
I feel you pierce my heart, oh, cold east wind !  
Sad east ! that leavest lifeless plains behind.

The dull earth, watching, sleeps  
Within her leafless bowers,  
Until the west wind coming weeps  
Soft tears that turn to flowers.  
Oh, cruel east ! that dost delay the world,  
Withering the leaf of hope while yet unfurled.

Over this gray cheerless town  
The yellow smoke-mist hangs, a squalid pall,  
And night, too swift for springtide, settles down  
Before the shades of mountain-evenings fall.  
I sicken here alone, dull day by day,  
To watch the turmoil wake and fade away.

Why does my dear not come,  
Or write or send some little loving word ?  
It is not here as 'twas at home.  
I have no companion but this prisoned bird ;



No friend in all the throng to hear my sighs ;  
No glance, but the cold stare of alien eyes.

No friend, nor love nor care  
To hold me ; but when summer suns return  
And wake this stagnant and exhausted air,  
The little dearer life for which I yearn  
May wake, and make me happier than of old,  
Watching the innocent life my arms enfold.

Cold east and drear,  
Spreading a noontide darkness on the town.  
You shall not blight my faith, nor make me fear,  
Nor leave me in despond, nor drag me down.  
I am alone ; but, if he loves me still,  
I am not all alone, sad days and chill.

---

## SCENE III.

I grieve that my father stays away,  
Though his letters are always dear and kind,  
But sometimes I think they seem to convey  
Some shadow of pain on a doubtful mind ;  
But he does not know that I am alone,  
For I could not tell him my dear was gone,  
And it may be he has not forgiven quite  
Our foolish and hurried flight.  
What? Do I not know—forgive, did I say?—  
That nought which falls short of committed wrong  
Would keep his heart from his child for long,  
Nought that a kiss would not chase away?

Dear father ! I would I might welcome him here !  
For, brooding here day by day,  
My mind grows full of a formless fear,  
And I dread the glance of the women ; the sneer  
Which I seem to see on their lips and eyes,  
As they ask sometimes with a hard surprise  
If my husband is ailing ; he keeps away—  
And I have but faltering words to say.  
And to-day I thought, as I sate in my lonely room,  
With a little frock on my lap, in the growing gloom,  
And the woman came with the lights, that she seemed  
to look  
With the old respect no more, but a cold rebuke.  
Does she doubt, then, I am his wife ? I will fly ; I will go ;  
I will tell her all my secret. Ah, no ! ah, no !  
Great Heaven, does she think he is gone and will no  
more come ?  
Oh, Henry, 'tis cruel to leave me, come to me, come  
home !

I

## SCENE IV.

This is the fourth dull week—

I am wretched and sick at heart—

Since the thought came first which I fear to write or speak,

And I have no rest at night ; for I suddenly start,

Thinking I hear his voice calling to me in pain,

Mixed with voices of scorn sometimes, through the dead  
city-night ;

And then, if my tired eyes sink to slumber again,

I wake in deadly fright.

And before the bustle of life revives in the street,

I watch for the hurrying sound of the messenger's feet,

And I hold my breath as he comes with a sickening fear.  
But the sharp summons passes on quickly, and never  
here

He comes ; but I must not despair, nor ever forget  
That I live for a ripening life, which 'twould injure to fret.

But I know that my face is pale and anxious and thin,  
Which my love would hardly know, if he saw me again ;  
And I look in the glass, and I start to see therein  
Two hollow eyes answer my gaze with a look of pain.  
And perhaps he would love me no more in my beauty's  
disgrace ;

Perhaps he was only a slave to a foolish face ;  
Perhaps—— But I know I am sick in body and mind,  
Or I could not doubt my love, who was always kind.

---

~      My heart is heavy,  
My life runs low,  
My young blood's pulses  
Beat faint and slow.

I cannot believe,  
Yet I dare not doubt,  
For when faith is shaken  
Love's fire goes out.

Oh, Love, what is this  
That thy strong power brings

To those thou hast touched  
With thy fast-fleeting wings?

Oh, Love, it was cruel  
To bring us to pain.  
I will hide me away  
From the cold world again.

I can stay here no longer ;  
Whatever may come,  
I will go to my father  
And—die at home.

My heart is heavy,  
My life runs slow ;  
To my Father in Heaven  
I open my woe.

## SCENE V.

What is it that has been?  
Let me once recall again  
The fear that came upon me,  
And the story of my pain.

Yester-eve, as I sat alone,  
Somebody entered, and read  
How the Earl, at some foreign bath,  
Had been ailing and now was dead ;



And pointed to the place,  
And the letters seemed to swim,  
And the whole room whirling round and round,  
As my sight grew faint and dim.

For 'twas said that the new Earl,  
His mourning done, would wed  
The heiress of whom he told me before;  
And I wished that I was dead.

And they muttered, with freezing glances,  
“They had thought 'twas thus, before;”  
And I could not answer a single word,  
But fell upon the floor.

And now I lie ailing and weak,  
Sick in body and mind and heart;  
But to-morrow, if God help me,  
I will rouse me and depart.

Oh, father, you will not spurn me,  
Nor think me what they say,  
But take us back to your heart and life,  
And my grief shall fade away.

---

## SCENE VI.

Oh, the sweet air of the hills,  
That on this fair summer night  
Breathes on me as I 'scape at last  
From the glare of the long day,  
From the dust of the long plain,  
And the rushing, maddening train !

Here I mount among the pines  
By the path we knew so well.

All is there unchanged but I.  
Hark ! the thunder of the fall.  
See the ash-grove where we sate.  
There we lingered at the gate.

Nothing changed, but I am changed.  
Slowly up the well-loved steep,  
Failing footsteps toiling slow,  
Where, upon the morning hills,  
Twelve months since my feet would go  
Bounding lightly as the roe.

None have seen me, that is well—  
Yet if here I were to fail—  
Courage ! I shall reach there—Nay,  
I must rest awhile ; then climb  
Slowly through the fragrant gloom,  
Where my garden roses bloom.—

It is finished. Dear white head  
Bending low upon thy book,  
Homely lamp, familiar room,  
Ye will welcome me, I know.  
Open, father ; I am come  
Broken-hearted to my home !



## ACT V.





## SCENE I.

GWEN.

It is over now.

I have been a long time ill,

But to-day I am able to wander slow

To the churchyard round the hill.

'Tis there they have laid my little love,

Who lingered three little months—it was not long—

And there they will lay me too, ere the waning light  
grows strong.

It is but a little grave

Where my little one is laid,

But I keep it decked with white flowers every day,  
And above, a kindly yew's protecting shade  
Shelters it safe from rain and wind.  
Sleep fast, my darling, sleep while yet you may ;  
Your mother will not linger long behind.

Dear child, I wonder when  
The last great morning breaks and we shall wake,  
If I may bear you then  
Safe in my nursing arms for Him to take ;  
Or will He suffer you to come before,  
White soul, while I am waiting at the door?

Dear little grave, I strew  
Fresh autumn flowers and garden blooms on you ;  
I strew upon you roses white and red ;  
I fling my heart upon you, narrow bed !

Once, twelve months since, I launched my heart, a rose,  
Where, lit with laughter, Love's swift river goes,  
And lo ! once more the year's swift pinions move,  
And now I cast it on the grave of love.

My love, my self, my child,  
Lie buried here, and I am free again.  
I would I were a slave ; I loved my chain.  
I would that I might see your sweet eyes mild ;  
They were your father's eyes, who loves not me——  
I blame him not, but do forgive for thee.  
It is not long I stay, my life, my dear,  
Not long until we are together here.

Last year—it seems an age ago—  
I had not seen him : then we went  
Together on our road ; and so,  
By ways and converse innocent,

We gained at last the sacred gate  
✓ Of wedlock, and the hand of Fate  
Lifted the latch, and we passed in  
To the enchanted ground therein.  
And now the winds of autumn rave,  
And love lies dead within a grave.

Dear love, that liest there so still,  
I go now till to-morrow's sun ;  
The autumn evening gathers chill,  
The day is well-nigh done.  
Sleep, dear, through all thy long untroubled night,  
Sleep calmly till the Light.

---

## SCENE II.

What? Can a second springtide burst,  
As happy as the first,  
From out the midst of dark autumnal days?  
And can the dead roots start?  
And can the withered heart  
Rise upward from despair to joy and praise?  
Yes, though with thrills of almost pain,  
They can, again.

For as I turned yesterday, sad and slow,  
From where my darling lies below,

Fulfilled with sad sweet thoughts of the things that have  
been,

I saw my dear father's kindly face,

As he came to meet me with hurried pace,

And a grave smile that told me the news that he bore  
was good ;

But he slackened his steps when he saw me, and calmed  
his mood.

And I said, "Tell me all." And he answered, "'Tis well,  
my dear.

He was faithful ; I knew it, and is, for his letter is here,"  
And he drew it forth ; and I knew that the writer was he,  
And the title was that which he bears, and 'twas meant  
for me.

Then my father kissed my forehead and left me alone,

And I sat down to read what he said on a graveyard  
stone.

My love ! He too had been ill, for a chill he caught  
When the Earl lay dying abroad, well-nigh brought him  
to nought ;

Growing to fevered heats and a wandering brain,  
Till he raved for his nurse of last year to soothe him  
again ;

And when, after many days, he had risen to find  
The wife he was forced to leave, with unquiet mind,  
He found me not, but they said I had gone to my home.  
And so, with loving regards, he promised to come,  
Almost ere his letter could reach me. Oh, love ! oh, my  
dear !

I shall see you again, though 'tis late ; and, meanwhile,  
a great fear

Rises up lest you grieve for your child whom you never  
have seen.

---

## SCENE III.

He has come, he has been ;

I have kissed him again and again.

Ah, God ! but it is hard to die,

For it was not he was to blame at all, but I.

It was I, with my coward distrust and unreasoning fear,

Who could not put faith in my love, but shrank back  
from a sneer.

I am glad he was true throughout, though my sentence of  
doom

Sounds clear as I lie alone in my own white room.



To-day was a happy day,  
When, upon my husband's breast,  
I leaned beside the grassy mound  
Where our firstborn lies at rest.

And we mutely went again  
By the dear old paths once more,  
And I half forgot my sorrow,  
And the world was as before.

And he spoke with cheering words  
Of the time when I should come

To cherish other children  
In his old ancestral home.

Oh, my love as true as steel,  
With your comfort kindly meant,  
I would not seek to shadow  
The light of your content ;

But a hundred signs assure me,  
Signs indefinite yet strong,  
That my fate is wholly written  
And I linger not for long.

Dearest, let us cling together,  
Heart to heart and eye to eye ;  
Let us be together living,  
And I shall not fear to die.

## SCENE IV.

HENRY.

This is the last time that I tread  
These unforgotten ways,  
For to-morrow we follow the swallow over the wave.  
We have spent our Mays ;  
Chill autumn has come and found us bent over a grave,  
The grave of our youthful love and the hopes that are  
dead.

My dear, she is very pale and worn,  
Save the brilliant spot that flushes on either cheek ;  
She recalls no longer the breezes and freshness of morn  
As she leans upon me, slow and weak ;

But I trust the warm summer sun and the honeyed air,  
And the daily sights and sounds of things that are fair,  
May rouse her and lighten her load of care.  
Dear child ! to think of her pining alone,  
While I lay longing for her and too weak to write,  
And afraid to disclose by a look or a tone  
The thing which discovered had wrecked us quite !  
Ah, me ! 'twas a wretched time ; and now it is done,  
My father is gone and my son, and I only remain,  
Weak in frame, with a fading wife and a burden of  
    pain.  
Dear soul, I will do what by love and by gold can be  
    done ;  
I will bask with you safe from chill in the southern sun ;  
And I pray that when summer returns and the meadows  
    grow green,  
You may sit in my stately home, as happy and proud as a  
    queen.

But, oh ! what a fear is there  
I dare not speak,  
As I see the crimson deepen  
On the pale wan cheek.  
Nay, love, you are more lovely so,  
A thousand times more fair,  
Than when, twelve little months ago,  
You went so free from care.  
More dear you are, my love, and sweet,  
A thousand times more dear,  
Than when my heart forgot to beat  
In the springtime of the year.  
A thousand times more dear, my love,  
A thousand times more dear,  
For the tender pity that you move  
And the anxious boding fear.

---

To-morrow, may it be  
A new existence that we twain shall prove  
Upon the western sea,  
Bound for some happier land of health and love.

New hopes, new fears, new pains,  
New joys ; our hearts are ready, and we trust  
The Omnipotent Will that reigns  
Lifts not our hopes to dash them in the dust.

We hope ; we cannot tell ;  
We go together alone, forgetting all ;

For love, it shall be well,  
Though life, a waning fire, may sink and fall.

Yet, if a prayer may move  
Thy dread decrees, Omnipotent Will,  
Spare, spare my innocent love  
To my fond gaze a little longer still.

---

## SCENE V.

GWEN.

Here is a calm bright day,  
And my husband's tender voice;  
He has climbed up from the village,  
And I struggle to rejoice.

For I feel that to sorrow longer  
For the little one who has fled,  
My angel who rejoices  
Among the blessed dead,

Were a morbid grief, displeasing  
To the Lord of joy and pain.



Nay, I will not sorrow longer ;  
I will strive to live again.

To the beautiful far countries  
Where the soft unfailing sun  
Beams cloudless through the winter,  
And the flowers are never done,

He will take me, undelaying,  
Nought beside us, only me,  
By the ship that leaves to-morrow  
The great city on the sea ;

Every morning growing milder,  
As we southward wing our way,  
Till our swift ship casts her anchor  
In some blue unruffled bay.

Stately cities I have read of,  
↓ Naples, Rome in all her pride—  
I shall see them all, a great lady,  
With my husband at my side.

I shall see them when returning  
From the sacred stream of Nile,  
From vast tombs of unknown rulers,  
/ And the Sphinx's changeless smile.

I shall see them. But in springtime,  
When the bitter east is done,  
I shall greet these dear old mountains  
Shining in the sober sun ;

I shall see my father smiling ;  
I shall bend once more again

O'er my sleeper's flower-strewed cradle,  
Not with all unmingled pain.

I shall come, though, maybe sooner,  
When I shall not see nor hear ;  
For my love has given his promise  
I shall rest beside my dear.

---

Farewell, oh dear, dear hills !  
I do not know if I shall see you more.  
Farewell ! 'tis set of sun, the night is near.  
Farewell ! Below, the mist of autumn fills  
The sleeping vale with winding vapours frore,  
And hides from sight the yellow woods and sere.

L

But on the heights the day's declining fire  
Bathes all the summits in a haze of gold.  
Not yet the cold mist, stealing high and higher,  
Touches the purple glow with fingers cold ;  
Not yet the ruddy light from out the sky  
Goes, nor the orange shadows fade and die.

Here, far above the grave of dying day,  
The clear night comes, and hills and vales grow dark.  
But soon the first faint star, a lucid spark,  
Glimmers ; and, lo ! the ineffable array !  
A myriad suns for one ! strange suns and far,  
The hidden homes where blessed spirits are !

Oh, night of Being, like the night of day,  
How should I fear because your shadows fall ?  
Who knows from what fresh glories thy dark pall  
For failing vision lifts the veil away ?

What boundless spiritual orbits rise  
Before the inward gaze of dying eyes !

Farewell, oh little grave,  
Wherein I leave my buried heart awhile !  
Thick yew, protect it well until I come ;  
Shelter it ; let not winds of winter rave,  
Nor sharp frosts fret nor snows, nor floods defile.  
Here is my heart, and here my waiting home.  
Farewell ! farewell !



## ACT VI.





## SCENE I.

HENRY.

The sweet cold air of these untrodden hills  
Breathes gently. Five and twenty years have gone  
Since here my father trod, young, high in hope,  
With all the world before him ; nor as yet  
The slow-consuming fire of deep decay  
Had sapped his youthful hope, and left his life  
To drag along its crippled journey, spent  
In southern lands, wherever the chill east  
Might come not ; year by year : and last of all,  
Since I have grown from boyhood, visiting

His country never ; cut off and divorced  
From all the joys that make existence sweet  
✓ To the aspiring great—the fame of men——  
The name which every morning's broad-sheet takes  
To the eyes and hearts of millions—all the thirst  
For the statesman's high career swallowed and lost  
In a strange lethargy which held him fast  
In an inglorious ease. And yet I know  
A time there was when the more generous part  
Allured his growing soul. For I have found  
Among his papers, time-stained notes which tell  
Of deeper studies far than I have dreamt of ;  
Of high hopes and ambitions ; such as fire  
( Those who, as he and I, are placed by Fate  
On such high vantage that to will alone  
• And labour is enough, and all the meed  
Of place, the Senate itself, which opens not  
To lower birth until slow-creeping age

Derides the folly, flings back early doors  
To their unbroken youth. These have I found.  
And, oh most strange of all ! close manuscripts  
Of sceptical themes—my father's, his who was,  
Of all men I have known, most rapt by faith  
And very full of Godhead—doubts and fears  
And anxious questionings, changed yet the same,  
Differing in form alone from those which now  
At our own Oxford echo through old rooms  
Filled with young heated disputants, whose minds  
Take with a frolic eagerness the doubts  
Which have perplexed all time. All these I found.  
Ah, life is wonderful ! We are the sport  
Of great laws swinging slowly through an arc  
Immeasurably vast. We doubt our doubts,  
We hug our faiths, and fancy we are free  
Who are shut fast of Time.

What power it was

That checked his soul I know not, but sometimes  
I think there must have come upon his life  
Some overmastering passion, some young love  
Such as the poets feign, for some young heart,  
Which held him back and clogged him. Yet I know—  
I would stake my life upon it—naught of wrong  
Came nigh him. Only hardly love it was  
That bound him to our mother—the high dame  
He spoke of seldom, mourned seldomer still,  
Whom scarcely I recall ; whose clear cold face  
Looks from beneath its coronet in my hall,  
Statelier than any of our line. Poor mother !  
She left us early—me and little Gwen ;  
Gwen, whom men know as Lady Gwendoline,  
Our father's darling, who now comes with me  
When hither, after years of exile spent  
From home and homely scenes, we turn and leave  
The turmoil of the Season and the chase

Of selfish worldlings, eager to secure  
Those who are rich or fair.

I had found of late,  
Among our father's papers, reference  
To this Welsh village, where, when he was young,  
He spent a summer. So we left behind  
The senseless whirl, and for a week or more  
In this unclouded weather, bright and fair,  
We rove unchecked upon these purple hills  
Where once our father, older scarce than I,  
Roved in that far-off summer. We have kept  
Our name and rank a secret, and are free  
To come and go at pleasure, as did he,  
Dear father, years ago. Ah ! sweet and strange,  
The cycle of a life which turns and turns  
Round to the self-same spot, changed yet the same  
The same but for the mystic beat of Time ;  
The same but for the ineffable change of Being,

Which in the same life, grown another, works  
Infinite depths of change.

Somehow, I know not  
If aught it be but fancy, but I think  
The secret of his life, if such there were,  
Lies hid within these hills ; and I remember  
One day, when he was dying and his voice  
Came feebler even than wont—the unruffled sea  
Was sapphire, and the orange-groves behind  
Showed flecked with gold—we heard a far-off bell  
Call from the campanile on the hill,  
And then he roused himself: “Hark ! ’tis the bell  
From the dear church-tower on the hill above—  
They both are there—’tis a fair spot—the path  
Is steep from out the village, but the air  
Is balmy—’tis the well-remembered bell—  
They are singing now in Welsh, and the sound soothes  
The sleepers by the yew.”

And now they tell me

There is indeed a church on yonder hill,  
A little church half hidden by dark yews,  
Which looks upon the long green vale and scans  
The ever-winding river. So my sister,  
Who learnt in Italy the sketcher's art,  
Has gone before, armed with all fit devices  
To snare the fleeting landscape. It is time  
To join her. I must hasten; it may be  
(She is not strong, dear sister, but soon tires)  
She tires of sketching and awaits me. Father,  
I would that you were with us, and might breathe  
This sweet cold air again as young as I.

---

## SCENE II.

GWEN.

How fair and fresh from this gray churchyard shows  
The rich green vale beneath. Upon the deep  
Lush meadows, where the black herds grazing seem  
Like rooks upon the grass, a silvery gleam;  
Now lost and now discovered, marks the place  
Where winds the brimming river. Here, thick woods  
Of oak and beech upon the sloping banks  
Bend to the shadowy stream which glides beneath.  
There, through the emerald meads, shallow or deep,  
It hastes or loiters, till the tall dark elms  
Grouped by the distance, hide it. And above,



On either hand the eternal mountains rise,  
Pine-clad below, upon whose upper heights  
The unfenced heather purples. All the sky  
Is flecked with soft white fleecy clouds which throw  
Bewildering charms of shadow; and beyond,  
A shining azure drawn 'twixt earth and sky,  
Glitters the summer sea. Most beautiful  
Thou art, oh motherland, which I have known  
As yet so little. Beautiful art thou  
My second mother, sunny Italy,  
Where the blue heaven is brighter, and the sea  
Gives back a clearer azure. But for me  
There grows a tenderer charm from these green fields  
And purple hills and white-flecked skies, denied  
To thy more brilliant landscape. Perhaps it is  
In part because my father loved them well,  
Dear father whom I loved, and who loved me  
Closer than might a mother.

Well ! enough !

I will draw no more to-day, but let the scene  
Sink on my soul, and fix itself, and breed  
Fresh scenes of beauty to inspire my hand  
When the short days are dull, and all the sky  
A gloomy pall, and gusts of wintry rain  
Beat on the darkling city.

I will muse

A little till my brother comes, and think  
How good he was whose memory brings us here ;  
How careless of himself, how prompt to give  
Whatever good a father's hand can give  
To his motherless girl. I scarcely had a thought  
He did not share, and as I think, indeed,  
He kept no secret from his earliest years  
Of which I knew not. He has told me all—  
His studious youth, his feeble health, the doubt  
Of God and man which for a while obscured

His noble brain and left it impotent—  
And somehow it was here, upon these hills,  
From out this very spot, it may be, gazing  
On all the loveliness of earth and sky  
And silver sea, the waters of his soul  
Were loosèd, and flowed onward strong and clear,  
To join the Infinite Deep !

There comes a cloud  
Upon the sky and gusts of sudden wind ;  
The beauty fades, as treacherous as youth,  
And fleeting, and I thought I heard a roll  
Of thunder drawing near. I would my brother  
Were come. I am afraid. The church is closed—  
It is not here as 'tis in Italy,  
Where all who choose may kneel as welcome guests  
Within God's House ; but yon thick yew that stands  
Above that gleaming cross will shelter me  
From heavier storms than this.

M

Here I am safe.

See with what tender care some loving hand  
Keeps green the sward, and sets it round with flowers  
That bloom as in a garden ! One red rose  
Twines round the cross, and sheds in this rude wind  
Its crimson petals. Two graves stretch beneath,  
And three sleep under. Ah ! 'tis the old vicar's  
Who lived here forty years and died last year.

"Also"—ah, see my brother comes at last—

"Also of"—strange, almost my name—"Gwenllian,  
His daughter, who died aged twenty years"—

The year?—one year before my father's marriage—

"Countess of"—What is this? My father's title !

Father, what means it?—"And her infant son

Henry, Lord"—What, my brother's? What is this?

It is strange. Quick ! I am fainting . . .

Henry ! Henry

## EPILOGUE.

The silent Forces of the World,  
Time, Change, and Fate, deride us still ;  
Nor ever from the hidden summit, furred,  
Where sits the Eternal Will,  
The clouds of Pain and Error rise  
Before our straining eyes.

It is to-day as 'twas before,  
From the far days when Man began to speak,  
Ere Moses preached or Homer sung,  
Ere Buddha's musing thought or Plato's silvery tongue.  
We pace our destined path with failing footsteps weak ;  
A little more we see, a little more  
Of that great orb which shineth day and night  
Through the high heaven, now hidden, now too bright,

The Sun to which the earth on which we are,  
Life's labouring globe, is as the feeblest star.

Nor this firm earth we know  
Which lies beneath our feet ;  
Nor by what grades we have risen and shall grow,  
Through chains of miracle, more and more complete ;  
By what decrees the watery earth  
Compacted grew the womb of countless birth ;  
Nor, when the failing breath  
Is taken by the frozen lips of Death,  
Whither the Spoiler, fleeing with his prey,  
The fluttering, wandering Wonder bears away.

The powers of Pain and Wrong,  
Immeasurably strong,  
Assail our souls, and chill with common doubt  
Clear brain and heart devout :

War, Pestilence, and Famine, as of old,  
The lust of the flesh, the baser lust of gold,  
Vex us and harm us still ;  
Fire comes, and crash and wreck, and lives are shed  
As if the Eternal Will itself were dead ;  
And sometimes Wrong and Right, the thing we fear,  
The thing we cherish, draw confusedly near ;  
We know not which to choose, we cannot separate  
Our longing and our hate.

But Love the Conqueror, Love, Immortal Love,  
Through the high heaven doth move,  
Spurning the brute earth with his purple wings,  
And from the great Sun brings  
Some radiant beam to light the House of Life,  
Sweetens our grosser thought, and makes us pure ;  
And to a Higher Being doth mature  
Our lower lives, and calms the ignoble strife,

And raises the dead life with his sweet breath,  
And from the arms of Death  
Soars with it to the eternal shore,  
Where sight or thought of evil comes no more.

Love sitteth now above,  
Enthroned in glory,  
And yet hath deigned to move  
Through life's sad story.  
Fair Name, we are only thine !  
Thou only art divine !  
Be with us to the end, for there is none  
But thou to bind together God and Man in one !

THE END.



# THE EPIC OF HADES.

## BOOK II.\*

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### OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"Fresh, picturesque, and by no means deficient in intensity; but the most conspicuous merits of the author are the judgment and moderation with which his poem is designed, his self-possession within his prescribed limits, and the unfailing elegance of his composition, which shrinks from obscurity, exuberance, and rash or painful effort as religiously as many recent poets seem to cultivate such interesting blemishes. . . . Perhaps the fine bursts of music in Marsyas, and the varied emotions portrayed in Andromeda, are less characteristic of the author than the prompt, yet graceful, manner in which he passes from one figure to another. . . . Fourteen of these pieces written in blank verse which bears comparison with the very best models make up a thoroughly enjoyable little volume. . . . Fully suited to maintain and crown the reputation the author has acquired by those which have preceded it."—*Pall Mall Gazette*, March 10th, 1876.

"It is natural that the favourable reception given to his 'Songs of Two Worlds' should have led the author to continue his poetical exercises, and it is, no doubt, a true instinct which has led him to tread the classic paths of song. In his choice of subject he has not shrunk from venturing on ground occupied by at least two Victorian poets. In neither case need he shrink from comparison. His Marsyas is full of fine fancy and vivid description. His Andromeda has to us one recommendation denied to Kingsley's—a more congenial metre; another is its unstrained and natural narrative."—*Saturday Review*, May 20th, 1876.

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\* Book II. was issued as a separate volume prior to the publication of Books I. and III. and of the complete work.

"In his enterprise of connecting the Greek myth with the higher and wider meaning which Christian sentiment naturally finds for it, his success has been great. The passage in which Apollo's victory over Marsyas and its effect are described is full of exquisite beauty. It is almost as fine as verse on such a subject could be. . . . The little volume is delightful reading. From the first line to the last, the high and delicate aroma of purity breathes through the various spiritual fables."—*Spectator*, May 27th, 1876.

"The blank verse is stately, yet sweet, free, graceful, and never undignified. We could have well wished that space had permitted us to make extracts. We confidently believe that our readers will agree with us in regarding this as one of the finest and most suggestive poems recently published. We trust to have, ere long, more poetic work from his hand."—*British Quarterly Review*, April 1st, 1876.

"The writer has shown himself more critical than his friends, and the result is a gradual, steady progress in power, which we frankly acknowledge. . . . This long passage studded with graces."—*Academy*, April 29th, 1876.

"No lover of poetry will question his right to rank as a true poet. His mark is made upon the age, and his future must be a matter of enduring interest."—*Sunday Times*, March 26th, 1876.

"From first to last, the work is that of a true poet, and such as a true poet alone could accomplish."—*Standard*, March 27th, 1876.

"Told as only a poet could tell such stories, with clearness of outline and chastity of colour; with rich, vivid imagination, always moulded and guided by an instinct of true artistic moderation and restraint; with a pathos and a tenderness which bring home to us the loves and the sorrows even of those dim shades, and enable us to feel across the ages the quick throb of human brotherhood. The world has to thank him for four volumes of true and exquisite poetry."—*Liverpool Albion*, March 18th, 1876.

"English blank verse of an exquisite sort, than which the Laureate himself pens none more perfect."—*Illustrated News*, May 27th, 1876.

## THE EPIC OF HADES.

*BOOKS I. and III. and the COMPLETE WORK.*

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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“The author’s present volumes continue the promise of his earlier work, and advance it somewhat further towards fulfilment. In one sense the idea of his Epic is not only ambitious but audacious, for it necessarily awakens reminiscences of Dante. Not unfrequently he is charmingly pathetic, as in his Helen and Psyche. There is considerable force and no small imagination in the description of some of the tortures in the ‘Tartarus.’ There is genuine poetical feeling in the ‘Olympus.’ . . . We might invite attention to many other passages. But it is more easy to give honest general praise than to single out particular extracts.”—*Times*, February 9th, 1877.

“The various symbolismes of the ancient myths are worked out with quite as much poetical feeling as in the former part. . . . The whole of this last portion of the poem is exceedingly beautiful. . . . Nor will any, except critics of limited view, fail to recognize in the Epic a distinct addition to their store of those companions of whom we never grow tired.”—*Athenæum*, March 3rd, 1877.

“Clytemnestra is a striking dramatic study. . . . The whole passage is as tragic as it is graphic. . . . Thus the author has achieved the task he set himself of showing that the myths of classic antiquity are capable of interpretation by a modern singer. A simple, lucid style, a spontaneous power of song, and a bright, fearless fancy enable him to seize and retain the sympathies of his audience. We believe that the Epic will approve itself to students as one of the most considerable and original feats of recent English poetry.”—*Saturday Review*, March 31st, 1877.

"We notice the same thoughtfulness and penetrating sympathy which have enabled the author, without doing violence to the sweet rounded grace of the old myths, to impart an undercurrent of present-day meaning and reference which should find for them a wider audience than could be expected for anything in the character of a severely Pagan revival merely. Thought, fancy, music, and penetrating sympathy we have here, and that radiant, unnamable suggestive delicacy which enhances the attraction with each new reading."—*British Quarterly Review*, April, 1877.

"The author most certainly possesses very great powers; but he is writing far too fast. We gladly repeat, however, that the present work is by far his greatest achievement; that the whole tone of it is noble, and that portions, more especially the concluding lines, are excessively beautiful."—*Westminster Review*, April, 1877.

"The work is one of which any singer might justly be proud. In fact, the Epic is in every way a remarkable poem, which to be appreciated must not only be read, but studied. It is that rarest of things, a book one would care to buy and keep."—*Graphic*, March 10th, 1877.

"This is in our opinion, in a high and serious sense, a remarkable poem—remarkable alike for thought, for music, and for fine suggestive quality. We look forward still to being made yet more the writer's debtors."—*Nonconformist*, February 21st, 1877.

"All his poems have proved him appreciative, thoughtful, and scholarly. 'The Epic of Hades' should rank highest of his work."—*Examiner*, February 24th, 1877.

"We do not hesitate to advance it as our opinion that 'The Epic of Hades' will enjoy the privilege of being classed amongst the poems in the English language which will live."—*Civil Service Gazette*, March 17th, 1877.

"Exquisite beauty of melodious verse. . . . A remarkable poem, both in conception and execution. We sincerely wish for the author a complete literary success."—*Literary World*, March 30th, 1877.

"The author never sinks low, but he often rises high, and thus you have poetry which pleases you as you read, which

shocks no sensibility, never wearies you, and often raises you into a serener atmosphere, in which the earthiness of the earth is lost sight of, and the pure and almost the divine are found. It will be surprising if the reader does not come to the conclusion that the author is a poet of very high order."—*Scotsman*, April 27th, 1877.

"Will live as a poem of permanent power and charm. It will receive high appreciation from all who can enter into its meaning, for its graphic and liquid pictures of external beauty, the depth and truth of its purgatorial ideas, and the ardour, tenderness, and exaltation of its spiritual life."—*Spectator*, May 5th, 1877.

"I have lately been reading a poem which has interested me very much, a poem called 'The Epic of Hades.' Many of you may never have heard of it; most of you may never have seen it. It is, as I view it, another gem added to the wealth of the poetry of our language."—*Mr. Bright's speech on Cobden at Bradford*, July 25th, 1877.

"I have derived from it a deep pleasure and refreshment such as I never thought modern poetry could give."—*The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol*.

"This poem is not in the merely technical sense an epic, any more than the divine poem of Dante is a comedy. That was a comedy, as passing to a happy close; from Hell, through Purgatory, into Paradise. This is an epic, as it is concerned with one great action; for the soul of man is shown throughout it labouring towards what Mr. Tennyson has called the

One far-off divine event  
To which the whole Creation moves.

In the blank verse of the 'Epic of Hades,' apt words are so simply arranged with unbroken melody, that if the work were printed as prose, it would remain a song, and every word would still be where the sense required it; not one is set in a wrong place through stress of need for a mechanical help to the music. The poem has its sound mind housed in a sound body."—*Professor Morley in The XIXth Century*, February, 1878.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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"If this volume is the mere prelude of a mind growing in power, we have in it the promise of a fine poet. . . . In 'The Wandering Soul,' the verse describing Socrates has that highest note of critical poetry, that in it epigram becomes vivid with life, and life reveals its inherent paradox. It would be difficult to describe the famous irony of Socrates in more poetical and more accurate words than by saying that he doubted men's doubts away."—*Spectator*, February 17th, 1872.

"Throughout there is the true lyrical note, the 'cry' that seems to veil itself in the harmony of the language it chooses, and so makes itself only the more imperatively felt. Seldom, indeed, does it fall to the lot of the critic to come on such a prize as this. . . . No extracts could do justice to the exquisite tones, the felicitous phrasing and delicately wrought harmonies of some of these poems."—*Nonconformist*, March 27th, 1872.

"In all this poetry there is a purity and delicacy of feeling which comes over one like morning air."—*Graphic*, March 16th, 1872.

## (SECOND SERIES.)

"In earnestness, sweetness, and the gift of depicting nature, the writer may be pronounced a worthy disciple of his compatriot, Henry Vaughan, the Silurist. Several of the shorter poems are instinct with a noble purpose and a high ideal of life. One perfect picture, marginally annotated, so to speak, in the speculations which it calls forth, is 'The Organ-Boy.' But the most noteworthy poem is the 'Ode on a Fair Spring Morning,' which has somewhat of the charm and truth to nature of 'L'Allegro and Il Penseroso.' It is the nearest approach to a master-piece in the volume."—*Saturday Review*, May 30th, 1874.

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"This volume is a real advance on its predecessor of the same name, and contains at least one poem of great originality, as well as many of much tenderness, sweetness, and beauty. 'The Organ-Boy' we have read again and again, with fresh pleasure on every reading. It is as exquisite a little poem as we have read for many a day."—*Spectator*, June 13th, 1874.

"The reception of the New Writer's first series shows that, in his degree, he is one of the poetical forces of the time. Of the school of poetry of which Horace is the highest master, he is a not undistinguished pupil."—*Academy*, August 11th, 1874.

"This series is superior to the first. No person of the least sensitiveness could read a few pages of this volume, and deny that the writer possesses the 'vision of the poet.' The glance, the touch, the hint suffice, and you have not only a picture, but a series of pictures. Of the poems we can only say that they are quick with wisdom and high thought, touched with phantasy, and flowing easily into imaginative forms."—*Nonconformist*, June 24th, 1874.

"A warm welcome is due to this pleasant and able volume of poems, which is marked by distinctness of aim, artistic clearness of execution, and that particular imaginative lustre which belongs to the truly poetic mind."—*Guardian*, September 20th, 1874.

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"Not unworthy of its predecessors. It presents the same command of metre and diction, the same contrasts of mood, the same grace and sweetness. It cannot be denied that he has won a definite position among contemporary poets."—*Times*, October 16th, 1875.

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It is not a thing in the  
of heart. The whole  
Then here is the heart - would be  
find a strong winter day -  
snow covers all - and we are  
the old man and woman,  
a man who is old and thin,  
and not all her life  
of the freedom and the  
look at the old man and woman  
We are not without hope - for  
of the heart and the  
There is no death - but  
In an instant of time,

